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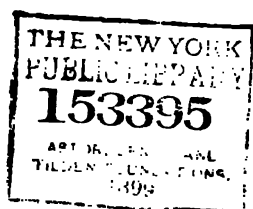
AN  
ESSAY  
ON  
HUMAN LIBERTY.

BY THE LATE  
REV. ISAAC MILNER, D.D. F.R.S.  
DEAN OF CARLISLE,  
AND PRESIDENT OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND;  
AND W. BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH.

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1824  
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# P R E F A C E,

BY THE EDITOR.



IT was understood that the late DR. MILNER had occasionally employed his leisure hours in the composition of various treatises on the most interesting subjects connected with Religion and Morals. The following Essay was found among his Papers, and has been printed with such alterations only as appeared to be necessary for the removal of verbal inaccuracies. One other Theological Tract of some extent was discovered; but, after mature deliberation, several reasons combined to shew the inexpe-

diency of publishing it, along with the **ESSAY ON HUMAN LIBERTY**. Many friends of the late Dean of Carlisle will, doubtless, feel great disappointment, when they are informed, that the rest of his writings on Theological subjects were not left in a state at all fitted to meet the public eye; and, even with regard to the Essay now committed to the press, the abrupt introduction of the Socinian, in the concluding paragraph, may justly excite a suspicion that the work had not received the finishing touches of its Author.

The subject of **HUMAN LIBERTY** had long occupied a considerable share of the Dean's attention; and his opinions upon it were supposed to lean to what is

called the Calvinistic side of the question. Yet the following Essay will shew, that he was neither a blind and indiscriminate supporter of the Calvinistic scheme; nor disposed to deny, to the arguments of the Arminian, the weight to which they are really entitled. Towards the conclusion of the Essay, he claims for himself the praise of fairness and impartiality; and the justice of the claim will probably be allowed by fair and impartial readers.

But to what purpose, it may be asked, is this Posthumous Work given to the public? Does it contain a more complete and satisfactory solution of the difficulties attending the abstruse question of Divine and Human Agency, than has before been offered?—They

who read it with the expectation of finding the perplexities of the subject in a great measure disentangled, will certainly be disappointed. Yet the publication may still be useful. It distinctly points out what the difficulties of the subject really are; and shews how far a serious inquirer may safely proceed in his investigation, and where it becomes him to stop. The blindness and ignorance of man is the great principle which is kept in view throughout the Essay. It exposes the vanity of all attempts to ascertain the ultimate cause of Volition; and the sophistical character of the reasoning by which both the Calvinist and the Arminian would account for the entrance of Sin into the world. Its obvious tendency therefore is, to deter

men from engaging in these unprofitable speculations. And surely an Essay written for such purposes, may be the means of effecting no unimportant good. Something at least will be gained, if the disputants in this interminable controversy are led to a clearer perception of the points to be established; and are induced, by the consciousness of the inextricable difficulties into which they are betrayed by their own opinions, to be more indulgent to the errors of their adversaries.

A brief Analysis of the Contents of the Essay, may not be unacceptable to the reader.

The Author, after a few preliminary remarks, enters upon his subject by



maintaining, that, as we are confessedly ignorant of the causes of all *material* operations, we cannot reasonably expect to arrive at the knowledge of the causes of *mental* operations:—for instance, the cause of Volition. (pp. 5–11).

He then details the respective opinions of the Arminian and the Calvinist, on the subject of Human Liberty ; and the grounds on which the former asserts, and the latter denies, the existence of a self-determining power of the human Will. (pp. 11–19).

He afterwards examines the consequences which flow from the opposite sentiments of the two parties:—first, as to the character of the Supreme Being, and the accountableness of man

(pp. 19–87); and secondly, with reference to what are termed the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. (pp. 87–113.)

He proceeds to trace the sources from which the opinions of the Arminian and the Calvinist respectively arise; and exposes the fallacy of those opinions, when carried to the extent to which the parties are generally disposed to carry them. (pp. 113–125.)

The Author then intimates the doubts, with regard to the certainty of moral distinctions, which the mysterious nature of the Inquiry is calculated to excite; and decides that, although our reason may be bewildered by the difficulties of the subject, we are still constituted moral agents—accountable

creatures—by the controlling principle of Conscience, which has been implanted in us by our Maker for that purpose. He concludes with a few general reflections. (p. 125, &c.)

At the same time that the Author mentions the doubts, respecting moral good and evil, which may arise from contemplating the Volitions of men as the effects of a succession of causes, he justly considers those doubts as a striking proof of our blindness and ignorance, “when we retire into our closets, and turn speculative philosophers.” Obscure, indeed, and unsatisfactory is this train of reasoning from cause and effect; and presumptuous would he be who, in a matter of so much moment, should determine to rely upon the

results to which it may appear to lead.

When the mind is beset by the difficulties which have arisen in the manner above described, there is, as Dean Milner has well observed, an immediate and decisive appeal to the moral constitution of man. Nor does this appeal interfere with the opinion which he had previously maintained, (pp. 82, 83)—that “there is, in the nature of things, an essential difference between virtue and vice.”—On this most important subject, the writer of these remarks is persuaded that the Dean of Carlisle would have adopted the language of Bishop Butler. “There are two ways,” says that great man, “in which the subject of morals may be treated. One

begins from inquiring into the abstract relations of things; the other, from a matter of fact, namely, what the particular nature of man is, its several parts, their economy and constitution; from whence it proceeds to determine what course of life it is, which is correspondent to this whole nature. In the former method the conclusion is expressed thus, that vice is contrary to the nature and reasons of things; in the latter, that it is a violation or breaking in upon our own nature. Thus they both lead us to the same thing, our obligations to the practice of virtue; and thus they exceedingly strengthen and enforce each other. The first seems the most direct formal proof, and in some respects the least liable to cavil and dispute; the latter is

in a peculiar manner adapted to satisfy a fair mind, and is more easily applicable to the several particular relations and circumstances in life.”

If, in conclusion, the Editor of the ESSAY ON HUMAN LIBERTY may be allowed to express an opinion of its merits, he will venture to say that, in point of style, it is throughout remarkable for its force and elegance, and in some parts for its grandeur; and—what is of much more consequence—that it is manifestly the production of a mind possessed of great powers, and well acquainted with the bearings of the subject under consideration.



**ESSAY**  
**ON**  
**HUMAN LIBERTY.**

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**1.**

**EVERY** subject, which is in itself entirely new, always proves the severest test of a writer's capacity. He has no light to direct him but his own understanding; every step which he takes in the unknown region is full of danger; he invents; he reasons; his conclusions appear probable or certain; till future inquiry points out some neglected circumstance, some unguarded step in the argument, and demonstrates the whole system to be doubtful or erroneous.



2. In questions which have already been frequently discussed, the case is widely different. Those who have gone before us have either been successful, or they have not. If they have, we have faithful guides to follow;—a great deal is already done to our hands, and we may improve a work which perhaps we could not have begun:—if they have not, at least they have left us their mistakes; and in contemplating these, we are sure to be gainers. We proceed with caution, and do not easily fall into similar errors. We may indeed fall into others; but why should we be anxious on that head—or why should we be afraid to conjecture anew, where it is allowed that preceding inquirers have already been mistaken?

3. The questions which arise concerning the nature of Human Liberty, are of the last importance. We judge so, because scarcely any moral writer has appeared, in any age or country, who has not paid some regard to this perplexed subject; and because it is obvious to common sense, that the very essence of moral obligation depends upon moral liberty. To what purpose do you lay down rules of conduct, and make distinctions in morality, when man is incapable of observing them? To what purpose do you allure by promise, or alarm by threatening, a being who owns himself to have no liberty, no freedom of action? He cannot be accountable for any thing he does, and it would be a vain attempt to convince him that he is so.

4. In considering this subject, which is allowed to be so important, authors seem to have succeeded in part:—they have defined the meaning of words, they have made useful distinctions, and have rendered the whole controversy intelligible. We shall avail ourselves of their instructions, and avoid as much as possible all verbal contentions: but where they seem to have concluded against reason and common sense, we shall not follow them implicitly, but go over the ground again, and pursue our researches with greater freedom, and with less diffidence, than we should have ventured to do had we been the first to traverse the obscure region. It is not that we, who come after, are excusable in writing nonsense, because they, who have gone before, have written what is little to the purpose; but still it is hoped that the

numberless contradictions and absurdities, which have been already advanced in the course of this intricate inquiry, will naturally lessen the expectation of the reader, and prove some apology for any new mistakes which may be contained in this Essay.

5. In contemplating the various objects of the universe, we are naturally led to observe a remarkable difference between the operations of matter and of the mind. By matter, we understand whatever is solid and extended; and by its operations, those innumerable effects which are produced by the mutual actions of bodies upon each other. By the mind is meant that unknown and invisible essence to which we refer, as a cause, all the various modes of think-

ing ; whether that essence be supposed to consist in some immaterial principle, independent of the body, or whether it arise from some peculiar organization of the particles of matter which compose the human frame. If we attempt to describe this difference which subsists between the powers of mind and body, we can do no more than enumerate some of the effects of each, and place them together in the view of the understanding. Thus, bodies are observed to persevere in their state of rest or motion, unless disturbed by some external cause : their minute parts cohere together with various degrees of force : motion is produced by impulse :—these are some of the most general and most obvious operations of matter. On the other hand, the mind perceives, remembers, com-

pares and compounds its ideas, discerns, chooses:—and these operations are universally allowed to form a distinct class from the preceding, and to arise from a dissimilar principle. The manner, indeed, in which this principle acts is entirely hidden from us; but then the effects are certain, equally certain with the ordinary operations of matter, which are the objects of the senses. I am as sure that I am thinking, as I am that the paper on which I am writing is white. I am *conscious* of the one; I see the other: and, without entering into the subtleties of those philosophers who deny the existence of matter, the evidence in both cases seems entire and complete. Nor is the ultimate cause of thinking, of which we must for ever be content to be ignorant, more obscure in

its nature than the causes of those daily changes and movements which we observe to take place in the material world. Those who think that they can explain the latter, more easily than the former, have but slightly attended to the subject. The powers of corpuscular cohesion, or of capillary attraction, are as little explicable as the various turns and windings of the human mind. Indeed, it is unnecessary to produce difficult or complicated instances, in order to be convinced that this is true. The husbandman *determines* to labour in a particular field, at a certain time;—he does so, and the plough, by its motion, turns up the clods of the earth : but the efficient cause, by which these effects are produced, is in both cases equally unknown to us. We are apt, indeed,

to think that we understand the causes of material operations, better than those of mental operations ; but this is only because the various modifications of matter are the objects of our senses, and are more familiar to us. The vulgar seldom attend to the operations of their own minds, and even philosophers do not, so often as they feel, or taste, or see ; and for this reason men are led to imagine that the nature of those material objects, which constantly present themselves to their senses, is better understood than the internal operations of the mind, which are conceived to depend upon a finer and more intricate machinery.

6. These general reflections may serve to introduce what is more particularly



the design of this Essay. *Willing* or *choosing* is an operation of the mind; and if the above representation be true, then to inquire into the ultimate cause of willing, or to attempt an explanation of the manner in which motives influence the will, must for ever be vain and useless, because in no one instance of thinking are we able to comprehend the essence of those internal principles which produce the effects. This is a truth of the greatest importance, which we should never lose sight of, throughout all our inquiries concerning Human Liberty. It admits not, perhaps, of direct proof; but by examining attentively what we do when we *think*, and what we then know beyond the simple consciousness of the existence of ideas, its evidence will clearly appear, and will

receive no small confirmation from considering, that the same blindness and ignorance extends to all our knowledge of material objects in the universe.

7. If this plain truth had been sufficiently attended to, I apprehend a great deal of pains might have been spared, and a great deal of confusion avoided, by that class of writers who maintain a self-determining power in the will. They imagine that they clearly discover some necessary connexion between the cause and the effect in many of the sensible operations of matter, but are conscious of no such perception when they attend to the production of their own volitions; and therefore they hastily conclude that motives have no necessary influence on the human mind; and

as they always suppose that our understandings are capable of assigning the true reason of every mental process, they boldly ascribe the volitions of man to the mysterious agency of a self-determining principle. This and similar attempts to penetrate into the essences of things, always produce useless or deceitful conclusions ; and however well explained and defended by their authors, never fail to prove in the end, like the occult causes of the ancient philosophers, so many different cloaks for ignorance and conceit. But we shall have occasion to explain this matter more fully.—In fact, there can be but two opinions concerning the nature of volition and free-agency. One class of metaphysicians maintains an entire indifference in the human soul, with re-

spect to every act of choice ; and supposes the very essence of freedom to consist in this :—It is not enough that I should be at liberty to walk or ride according to the determination of my will, but the will itself must be uninfluenced by every external motive, and the choice must at last arise from some pure and simple principle of *activity* in the mind, which, in defiance of all exhortation and inducement, determines arbitrarily and decisively, and often against the judgment, by its natural and inherent sovereignty.—These are the sentiments of the Arminian. The Calvinist, on the other hand, affects to deride the notion of liberty, consisting in indifference and a self-determining principle. If the Will determine itself, then, because the will can act only by

choosing, it follows, that in every free choice, there is a previous determination of the mind; and for the same reason this previous determination itself must be preceded by another choice; and by repeating this argument, you are inevitably reduced to the perplexing dilemma of acknowledging an infinity of volitions, or of admitting the first volition to exist without a cause. In a similar way the opinion of a freedom of indifference is briefly refuted. For if liberty consist in that, then the will must be indifferent at the time of the choice; and what can be meant by a principle of activity which exerts itself to the production of a particular determination in a state of perfect indifference? If it be said that every single act of volition is preceded by an inexplicable

operation of the mind, which is essentially different from the act of choosing, and is to be considered in each case as the efficient cause of the future choice, it is sufficient to answer, that, whatever this secret operation may be, it cannot consist in indifference, because that is entirely repugnant to every idea of causation; and if it do not consist in indifference, if the mind be already *inclined* to a particular direction in preference to all others, it will be allowed us to inquire into the cause of this particular inclination; and if the same answer be given, it will always be reasonable to ask the same question again; and by proceeding in this manner, we shall find it necessary to stop somewhere; and if so, we had better have stopped at the original volition, and have ac-

knowledge our ignorance. Any one particular inclination of the mind is not more easy to be accounted for than any other, nor does there seem to be any advantage gained by multiplying these imaginary determinations of the mind, which grow more obscure and difficult the farther they are removed from our ordinary feelings and consciousness.— Let us attend to matter of fact and experience. We are conscious to ourselves of a faculty that chooses ; and in many cases we find that we can act according to the determination of this faculty. Here then is Liberty. But we are sometimes restrained from acting as we please, by natural impediments. If I wish to leave the room I am sitting in, and the door be locked and another have the key—or if I wish to read at this moment,

and be prevented by a head-ache—in both cases I am under a natural necessity—I cannot do as I please. And this brief explication of liberty and necessity, the Calvinist contends, is obvious and natural, and both agreeable to the dictates of sound reason, and the ordinary conceptions of mankind; and all beyond this is the dangerous result of a vicious curiosity, which, aiming at a higher and more perfect description of liberty, for a while amuses the deluded Arminian with unintelligible fancies, and at last leaves him involved in obscurity and contradiction.

8. The different sentiments, which we have now briefly described, either are or may be maintained concerning the nature of Human Liberty. It is of



no consequence whether Calvin and Arminius, or any other persons, have thought precisely in the manner here explained: it is sufficient that the terms Calvinist and Arminian afford the means of distinction, and that there is some foundation for the use we have made of them, in the history of the sects which we are generally accustomed to denominate by those terms. -- We now proceed to examine into some of the consequences of these opposite sentiments, and see how the turn of thinking which disposes the Arminian and the Calvinist to differ in the leading article of Volition runs through the whole of their arguments, and produces in each of them a peculiar mode of explaining some of the most important points in morality and religion.

9. And first, because the Arminian denies the necessity of motives to produce the volitions of moral agents, he finds himself obliged to admit the possibility that an event may sometimes happen without a cause; and this he explains in a manner entirely satisfactory to himself, and, as he conceives, perfectly consistent with every rational argument for a first cause.—In corporeal objects, because matter is passive, nothing ever comes to pass without the exertion of a sufficient cause to produce the effect: A piece of matter never begins to move or alter its position without the energy of some preceding force; in a thousand instances we can judge of the effect before it happens, from the nature of the cause; and in all the operations of bodies, there is so great an analogy

kept up, and the inertia of matter is so well established from experiment, that, even in cases where the cause is not visible, we reasonably suppose that there *is* one, and never ascribe the minutest changes, which happen in natural bodies, to any inherent principle of causation. But we must be careful not to extend this reasoning too far; that is, to cases where the analogy does not hold. Immaterial substances are essentially different from material ones; and, as far as we can judge from experience, seem to be possessed of certain *active* principles, which are best described by saying that they are the direct contrary of that *inertness* which is allowed to be essential to matter. It is no objection to the existence of these principles, that we are unable to explain their es-

sence: it is sufficient that there is reasonable ground for this belief in the nature of things. We never see how the volitions of thinking beings are brought about, nor does any thing ever precede them which can fairly be supposed to have a necessary connexion with the event. When one billiard ball strikes another we are sure that motion will ensue, because that was never known to fail upon any single occasion. But can we say the same of the human will, which too often resists the most powerful inducements of interest and persuasion, and determines in direct opposition to our most reasonable expectations? Is there not frequently, in the dispositions of particular men, something so capricious and whimsical, that we dare not rely upon the determina-

tion of their minds for any considerable time? We are not sure that they entertain the same sentiments now, that they did an hour ago; they have repeatedly deceived us on the most important occasions; and were we compelled, on any emergency, to give a previous judgment of their conduct, the best rule we could prescribe to ourselves in such a case might be, to conjecture in that particular way, which an attentive and judicious observer of mankind would think the most inconsistent and improbable. Here the Arminian finds himself at ease, and triumphs in the perfection of that doctrine which can alone account for the folly and inconstancy of human nature. The motives, he contends, are entirely the other way; and even the judgment

of the person himself will often condemn him at the very time that his will consents to a preposterous action: his will consents, and by a sudden and bold interposition of its commands, at once overturns the feeble endeavours of reason and motives; and demonstrates the natural looseness and indifference of that extraordinary faculty.— This obvious difference between the cases of material and mental operations must strike every attentive inquirer, and lead him to conclude that human volitions, because not regularly and uniformly preceded by motives, require not the existence of causes in the same sense in which the operations of bodies do; but that spirits contain in themselves certain springs of action and

self-determining principles. Such a conclusion affirms not that spirits are self-existent; and consequently weakens not the usual arguments for a first cause. It is an undoubted truth that no being ever comes into existence without a cause; and therefore the mind of man in its creation requires the exertion of Almighty power, as well as his body. But that the Supreme Intelligence and Being, who is Himself allowed to be perfectly free and independent, should not be able to communicate to a created spirit some portion of that inexplicable essence which is capable of producing voluntary determinations without any external influence, is difficult to conceive, and can never be demonstrated.

10. An intelligible objection, replies the Calvinist, may admit of an answer; but where some truths are mixed with a great deal of error, and the whole is involved in doubtful expressions, it is hardly possible to frame a distinct confutation of such obscure difficulties. The very notion of a self-determining principle is either trifling or absurd. It is trifling, if you only mean that the will always chooses what is most agreeable to itself: it is absurd, if you affirm that there is no reason in the nature of things for any particular inclination of the mind. Allow, for once, that an event of any sort whatever comes about without a cause for its existence, and there is an end of all Natural Religion. We infer not the necessary existence of a Deity from reflecting that no intelli-



gent being ever comes into existence of itself; but because events of every possible kind are always preceded by something else: and we reasonably believe an impossibility to be implied, in supposing such events to take place, without some necessary connexion with the preceding causes.—It is not enough to say that the will determines; because it is not asked what determines. The thing here insisted on is, that, in a particular determination of the will a particular reason is absolutely requisite to produce the effect; and that nothing ever starts up into existence from non-entity, or a total negation of all causes. If you persist in denying this self-evident principle, which is the foundation of all our reasonings concerning matters of fact, and which those who

have made the greatest advances in scepticism and free-thinking have never attempted to dispute—we must desist from all argument and appeal to the common sense of mankind, in a case which admits not demonstration or any regular process of reasoning. You allow that in material objects no changes ever take place, without the operation of certain powers, as cohesion, attraction and gravity; but the active and subtle nature of spirits, you think, is entirely exempt from the power of external impressions. Examine well the grounds of this supposed difference, and you will soon be convinced that either the operations of matter are the fortuitous results of self-determination and indifference, or that the Volitions of the human soul are inseparably con-

nected with motives and inducements. It is not true, as you so confidently affirm, that our own Volitions are not constantly preceded by motives ; and you apprehend not how easy it is to answer your specious argument. We may safely admit, for example, that the offers of eternal happiness (the strongest motive imaginable) cease to have due effect upon the mind of him who foolishly prefers the temporary gratifications of sensual pleasure and amusement : but will you infer, from this concession, that he is influenced in his conduct by no motives or reasons ? or, is it not better sense to affirm, that the temporary gratification itself is the prevailing motive ?—Admirable conclusion ! mankind are not always governed by the wisest and most rational motives,

therefore their Volitions are contingent and arise from a principle of indifference! Our tempers, it must be owned, are sometimes capricious and unsteady; and we choose too frequently what some moments before we had prudently resolved to avoid, and what we are conscious at the time will be attended with the most pernicious consequences; but still it may be presumed that we never determine contrary to our own inclinations upon the whole. Forbear to insinuate so glaring a contradiction: we choose indeed absurdly and in direct opposition to the dictates of our better judgment; but what can you conclude from this, except that a transient thought, a momentary pleasure, a glance at some distant object, may, in some circumstances, be the most effectual mo-

tives, and prove more than sufficient to counterbalance the previous determinations of reason and the operation of causes, which in the ordinary course of things are found to preserve a decisive influence. The fact is, we are not always able to infer the consequences of various motives, because of the fluctuating nature of the human disposition. There can be no doubt that, if man remained precisely the same at every period of his life, the same motives of interest, of persuasion, of appetite, would produce precisely the same effects, with a never failing repetition:—but if the subject be altered, either by known or incomprehensible causes, and you have not sufficiently attended to the alteration, you will be deceived in expecting the

same results under different circumstances. Nor is this any more than what constantly happens in the material world. The experienced chemist pretends not to foretell the sensible effects of his experiments, unless he be perfectly master of all the circumstances which may attend the operation. He knows that the slightest alteration in the property, the quantity, or the position of his subjects, will often give rise to the most extraordinary changes; and he has sometimes been surprised with sudden and important discoveries from some trifling and accidental variation in the process, which has hitherto been thought completely arbitrary and unworthy of attention. Omitting, therefore, such intricate cases as exceed the narrow limits of human comprehension—

take your examples both of the operations of bodies and spirits, in the simplest circumstances. Is it less certain, for instance, that a child will gladly accept something offered, which is agreeable to its taste, than that water will move along a descending channel? And yet, the water in one case, if frozen, will cease to flow, and the child in the other, if sickly, will reject his sugar-plums. Do you not *expect* that an unfeeling miser will pass by unmoved the next object of distress he meets, with as much confidence of the event, as, when fatigued by labour, you receive food in expectation of refreshment? It is needless to multiply instances, when you may learn by those already given, that the universal principle of causation can never rationally

be given up, but extends itself to immaterial as well as material substances. In this respect, they are both upon a footing. In neither case can we ever perceive the ultimate connexion of the cause with the effect. In both, we very often experience a constant connexion in nature, and can infer the future effect, with the highest degree of probability, from the preceding cause : and as the various properties of bodies are better understood in proportion to the number of careful experiments which are made upon them, so mankind are agreed, that constant observation and intimate acquaintance with a person will by degrees lay open the internal fabric of his mind, and enable a judicious observer to predict almost with certainty how



he will resolve and act, in a variety of situations.

11. The Arminian feels the force of this reasoning, but is alarmed at the consequences which he conceives to flow from it. A doctrine which manifestly tends to impiety, and subverts every principle of moral obligation, can never be founded in good sense and sober argument. You pretend to be anxious to maintain the existence of a first cause, and yet you introduce the Deity surrounded with an invincible necessity. As well might you affirm that the parts of this visible creation fell into order of themselves, or were impelled by some blind, unguided force, as place a Deity at the head of the whole who is himself

passive in his nature, and therefore perpetually subject to the violence of external impression. If the Supreme Being act not voluntarily, if he be not perfectly independent of every thing without himself, and contain not the fountains of intelligence and of action in his own incomprehensible essence—in a word, if he be liable to constant interruptions and preventions from the necessary influence of motives and powers, or else must sink inevitably into a profound lethargy from want of internal thought and activity—I know not what there is worth contending for in natural religion : and how do you differ from the confirmed Atheist, who asserts that there is a fatal necessity presiding over every event from the beginning of time ? But lest you should think that this representation of your

doctrine is exaggerated, attend to the following argument.—If nothing ever happen without a cause, and if this principle extend to spirits as well as bodies; then, when God brought into existence this immense system of things which we contemplate, His choice was not properly and philosophically the cause of that event, but something else which effectually impelled the divine mind, and by its secret and necessary operation produced the wonderful result. If to avoid this conclusion, you should say that that particular choice was made because it appeared *best* to Him before whom all things lie open, you have yourself taught us to inquire farther into the cause of that appearance, and to ask for a reason *why* it appeared best that such a particular system and no other, just

so much matter and no more, should be created at a particular moment of infinite duration, and continue for a succession of ages in that fluctuating condition which we here experience. In whatever manner you choose to explain these obscure and perplexing questions, you will at least be consistent with yourself, and therefore must ever insist on that principle of necessity which you so strenuously contend for, in the beginning of the existence of every event. It is this necessity which is to us a stumbling block. The Supreme Intelligence could not possibly have done otherwise: God is no longer an independent agent, understanding with perfect wisdom and choosing with perfect liberty: He is the passive, mechanical medium of Fate—of some superior and hidden powers,

which controul the freedom of his actions, and inevitably direct his motions. Man, we are agreed, is a dependent being ; but according to you, how is he dependent on the first cause of all things ? God has endowed him with bodily faculties, with intelligence and a sense of his duty, not because it was his pleasure, but because in the nature of things it could not be otherwise : He has surrounded him in this lower world with a rich profusion of conveniencies and comforts, and daily anticipates his wants with a superintending Providence—yet he is not good and benevolent :—events are indissolubly connected with each other ; and the order of this world, and all that is therein, admitted not of the smallest variation in position or arrangement.

We are taught to believe that man was plunged in guilt and misery ; and that, to relieve his sufferings, and restore his nature, God freely sent his own Son into the world :— but the Calvinist informs us that we have nothing to thank him for on this head : He is neither holy, just and good, nor compassionate and merciful : He does no more than he is absolutely compelled to do ; and in the whole of these amazing transactions, his Will is directed by the steady influence of an unconquerable necessity. But suppose we could solve all these difficulties that occur in the moral character of the Supreme Being, which will never be the case, there are others of a more serious nature, because of nearer concernment to ourselves, which are utterly inexplicable on the

supposition of universal necessity. It has been usual to consider voluntary acts as properly our own ; and to suppose men worthy of commendation and reward, when these actions are agreeable to certain established rules of Religion and Morality. We may add that it is not the external action itself, but the nature of the disposition in the agent, which constitutes the degree of blame or merit ; and though sometimes in ordinary discourse we apply the terms vicious and virtuous to the outward actions, yet whenever we would express ourselves accurately on this subject, we always refer to an inward faculty of choosing, in which the essence of virtue and vice is supposed to reside. Now according to Calvinistical tenets, there is not the least

foundation in reason for this distinction: The hand which strikes the blow is as guilty as the heart which meditates the murder ; because both are equally determined by the necessity of an antecedent cause, and neither contains in itself that first-moving principle which is strictly the cause of the event. In vain do you urge the essential difference between the passive motions of unthinking matter and the secret determinations of the will, when both these operations are carried on by the energy of external powers, and may therefore justly be said to resemble, in the most important article, the mechanical contrivances of human ingenuity. Have the different names of Willing and Striking, by which you choose to denominate these necessary effects, such mighty influence on



your mind, that you should suppose a capability of blame in the one case and not in the other?—or, is it like a philosopher to ascribe to substance imaginary properties, which have no foundation in reason or experience? A cannon ball, the sail of a wind-mill, the hand of a murderer, you will say are incapable of guilt, because they have neither understanding to judge of the effects of their motions, nor will to determine their directions. True: but then they are not immoveable; they can *suffer* from something else, which makes no part of themselves, and never fail to yield to the explosion of gunpowder, the violence of the winds, and the resolutions of the human soul. And what, I beseech you, are these boasted faculties of understanding, judgment, and will, but so many dif-

ferent passive powers, which infallibly bend under the pressure of external motives, and are always regulated in their motions and directions by necessity and compulsion; and in what sense can we fairly call the determinations of judgment and choice our own, when in reality those determinations form the settled parts of an endless series of necessary events?—If these conclusions appear not sufficient to convince you of the fallacy of your principles, it may be worth while to reflect that the sentiments of the common people, who never trouble themselves with metaphysical niceties and refinements, are plainly repugnant to your system of necessity. They never imagine themselves to blame for doing what they cannot help; and in cases where the necessity is not extreme,

they always suppose the obligation lessened in proportion to the number of obstacles and impediments which are thrown in their way. Agreeably to this, the man who in the course of his duty surmounts these obstacles and impediments, is deemed to possess extraordinary merit, because he discovers a more lively sense of obligation, and a more vigorous exertion of moral endowments. Nor do they conceive themselves excusable in the omission of certain actions, only when they are hindered from performing them by the application of bolts and bars; the mind itself must be free and unfettered, and move with perfect liberty amidst the various contentions of reason and passion.—You Calvinists triumph in distinguishing moral from natural inability : you admit the latter

to be a reasonable excuse for neglect of duty, but persist in affirming that no man of common sense ever requires more liberty than to do as he pleases ; and that it is the height of absurdity to suppose *moral inability*, or the want of will to do good, to be a rational plea for doing evil. It is much to be wished that you would sometimes consult the opinion of those whose minds have never been perverted with subtile argument, or prejudiced by system ; and you would soon perceive that there is understood to be something farther in the nature of human liberty than simply a power to do as we please. The truth is, the generality never suppose it possible for the subtile texture of the mind to be subject to impulse or protrusion, or to admit of restraint and confinement ;

and therefore, in describing their notions of liberty, they will often content themselves with removing every external impediment to the completion of their voluntary determinations; but by carefully asking some very obvious questions, you will easily discover their real sentiments on the subject. If you inquire into the cause of any particular action, or ask a man of plain sense and experience whether he was compelled on any occasion to act in such a particular manner, he may probably answer that he was not compelled, but acted voluntarily and quite agreeably to the determination of his own will. So, if you ask him whether the last man who robbed his house could not have forbore that action, he will certainly answer that he might if he had pleased.

If you press him farther, by doubting whether, in the commission of that robbery, there was a contingency of the event, which is directly opposed to all necessity, he will be silent; for he does not understand your meaning: but if you explain yourself by inquiring whether, in the nature of things, it was possible that the event should not have taken place, or whether he does not conceive the mind of the robber to have been *irresistibly* urged by poverty, avarice or resentment; he will quickly apprehend the tendency of your questions, will decide positively against you, and reject with abhorrence all such groundless and unnatural suppositions. In fact, the more diligently you attend to the genuine feelings of nature, the farther will you penetrate into the depths

of this unfathomable subject. Deceive not yourself in the manner of conducting this experimental inquiry, and the honest answers of sensible men will not fail to instruct you : you will soon perceive that the whole intelligent creation with one voice proclaims the freedom of the spiritual principle. It is but here and there that we meet with a serious Fatalist ; whose refined genius has been pushed into profane absurdity by the force of a restless and inquisitive temper, or from whom perhaps long continued melancholy and misfortune have extorted complaints against the nature of God, and the dispensations of his providence. Why will you then adhere so firmly to a doctrine which is at perpetual war with the very constitution of our minds ; and which, if carried into

practice, must soon dissolve the bonds of society, and introduce the most horrid scenes of disorder that imagination can paint. In reality, you make no difference among men : good and bad dispositions—virtue and vice—have lost their meaning : he ceases to be the best man who has the best heart : he only deserves your praise who, rambling carelessly through the various scenes of life, happens to meet with efficacious motives of a certain class in the greatest number. Two children, for instance, of the same years and temper, as far as we can judge, are separated from each other at a tender age ; and, while one is educated in a sober and religious family where he soon acquires virtuous habits of labour and decency, the other is exposed to the constant and profligate



example of the lower class of seamen, and is quickly plunged into all the vicious excesses of that unthinking people : you will say that there is not the least allowance to be made for the different situations of these youths, and you are not sensible that your principles necessarily lead you to judge of characters in a manner which common sense and the general notions of mankind must for ever disapprove. But lest you should imagine the case we have produced to be a proof of the necessary efficacy of motives, we must observe that the active powers of the Will still preserve their independence in the most trying circumstances ; and experience shews that it is possible for our young seaman to prove an eminent example of piety and resolution, amidst all the pressing

inducements to profaneness and debauchery. Here is superior virtue : here is a striking instance of the natural freedom of the mind : the motives are evidently on the side of vice.—Moreover, is it certain that moral inability is in no degree allowed to be a just excuse for doing wrong ?—Consider the case of the Drunkard ; who, by continued and excessive indulgence of a depraved appetite, finds it hardly possible to avoid the destructive gratification. All men agree that, by a particular intoxication, he incurs far less guilt, than a man of sober habits and inclinations ; and that his principal demerit consists in having permitted so pernicious a custom to vitiate his nature and render him almost mechanically subject to the certain influence

of bodily sensations.—Again, is it certain that, before the happening of any event, an impossibility is always implied in supposing that event never to take place? What folly then to sow our fields with corn, when the harvest depends not upon that step! What folly to pursue imaginary objects with fruitless and incessant labour, when human endeavours are in no degree conducive to the desired end! Why so eager to command, to persuade, to threaten, when minds, as well as bodies, can only move in one direction? What means this general bustle and painful anxiety observable on every countenance? The whole is one grand delusion: cease from your unavailing industry: the good will come: the evil cannot be avoided. These are the ge-

nuine effects of your principles. Happily, man's natural good sense gets the better of such destructive refinements; makes him see the necessity of acting with prudence and foresight; and in general leads him to practise what is most directly contrary to the tendency of such speculative notions.

12. The Calvinist is fully sensible of the disadvantage he is under, whenever application is made to the feelings of mankind concerning the moral tendency of his opinions. There is something so frightful and disgusting to human nature in representing all mankind under the influence of a Mechanical Necessity, that we are inclined to reject almost without examination, any doctrine which carries along with it

the suspicion of so odious a sentiment. You, Arminians, are perfectly aware of this; you mistake our meaning either purposely or through inattention; you draw dangerous inferences from the most innocent principles, and exaggerate them with all the force of eloquence. A mode of proceeding this, well calculated to procure you the applause of the unthinking multitude, and render your adversaries detestable; but which at the same time seems below the sober dignity of a philosopher, who, regardless of popular opinion and prejudice, embraces truth with eagerness wherever he finds her. How far a doctrine deserves to be rejected because some particular dangers are apprehended from the belief of it, may be a question of importance in some

controversies, but will be entirely useless here. The opinion of Moral Necessity, properly explained and understood, is so far from being justly chargeable with any such consequences, that it is the only foundation upon which a rational and consistent practice can be erected; and we may boldly challenge the most ingenious Arminian to produce any other system which is not big with absurdity and contradiction, and repugnant to what we every moment feel within ourselves and experience in the external world. In general the best method of exposing fallacy and sophism, is by fairly representing the truth; and contrasting her openly with the delusive resemblances of truth. On this occasion, however, it may perhaps be convenient

to proceed in a contrary order, and to begin by pointing out the foundation of the usual objections and cavils which have a tendency to prejudice our minds and retard the progress of our researches in these inquiries.— And first, in discoursing on this subject, there are several terms which we are obliged to make use of, and which have a two-fold signification. When we say that we are *unable* to perform any particular action, we may either mean that our natural faculties are not sufficient, (as when I have not strength enough to remove a heavy weight, or capacity to understand a difficult subject); or we may refer to the internal disposition of our minds, and suppose that there is in that disposition something so contrary to the required ex-

ertion, that in the nature of things it is impossible we should make a particular choice. Thus a man may be *unable* to take up arms against the lawful government of his country, through bodily weakness and infirmity; or he may be so good a subject, and have so strong a sense of social duty upon his mind, that he can never think of pursuing so criminal a measure. It is manifest that the Inability or Necessity here spoken of is very different in the two cases; nor is it worth disputing which is the more proper sense of those terms, provided we always keep in mind their ambiguous use, and consider how liable we are in many cases, by a natural association of ideas, to affix the same properties and affections to different things, which



are called by the same names.—If you bind the arms of a person who sincerely desires to refrain from wine, and compel him involuntarily to drink that inebriating liquor—in this case we agree that he is excused from guilt, because he is *unable* to act according to the determination of his own will: but if his inability to refrain, as in the case of the drunkard, which you produced, arise from habit only—that is, if he finds himself *unable* to refrain because he has not refrained for a long course of time—this is neither excuse nor extenuation of guilt; but on the contrary is the highest aggravation of it we can possibly conceive. As long as there are any calls of conscience or internal misgivings, as long as men yield with reluctance to the solici-

tations of irregular appetites, they are not supposed to be too far gone for all hopes:—but the struggling efforts of reason grow faint, and at last cease; the voice of conscience grows feeble, and at last dies away; and it is the last stage of wickedness, when a man's actions are judged to be peculiarly sinful, as resulting from a disposition completely hardened and corrupted. You deceive yourselves with the sound of a word: you transfer imperceptibly the innocence which is really constituted by natural inability, or want of understanding and bodily strength to do better, to cases to which it cannot belong: habit confirms the delusive practice, and it is vain to insist on a distinction, however important, which to you appears ridiculous and imperti-

nent. Astonishing deception ! The longer we remain addicted to any particular vice, the less are we to blame in every succeeding indulgence; and at last, when we yield almost mechanically, as you term it, to the temptation or allurements—or in other words, when Religion and Morality have lost all their influence upon our minds—our actions become entirely innocent!—Were we disposed to indulge a spirit of raillery and declamation, and appeal to the imaginations of men rather than to their judgments, how fruitful a topic were this:—it may justly be questioned whether the whole history of Pagan superstition and enthusiasm, in the most barbarous and ignorant ages, can furnish an example of so gross an absurdity. A similar misapprehension of the mean-

ing of terms, to this which we have just described, seems, in general, to be the foundation of your objections to the sentiments of a moderate and intelligent Calvinist. You observe a malefactor loaded with irons, and his escape prevented by strong bolts and a guard over his person ; and you justly ask whether it does not savour of insult and injustice rather than of friendship and benevolence, to command or persuade such an one to leave his confinement and to inflict the punishment of stripes and hunger for his disobedience. But suppose the prison doors are thrown open, his limbs are set at liberty, he is acquainted with the free pardon of his crimes, he is exhorted to come out and discharge the duties of a good citizen

in future—and he does not choose to obey:—in this case, perverseness and stupidity of temper produce exactly the same effects as bolts and chains and an armed centinel; but you are not thence to infer an equality of demerit in the two cases. It is true, our malefactor can never resolve to act wisely, till his present disposition be changed; but then you are always to remember that this is a moral inability: and if a moral inability, according to your sentiments, be incompatible with blame, at least you must confess that it is not so upon the same grounds and reasons that natural inability is; and that he who supposes so confounds together things the most distinct in themselves, and by an ambiguous use of the terms Necēs-

sity, Impossibility, and some others of a similar kind, is induced to draw rash and hasty conclusions.

13. All that we know of Human Nature is plainly the result of experience and observation. We find ourselves possessed of certain corporeal faculties, and at the same time surrounded with innumerable wants and necessities. We are evidently dependent on some superior Being: and we have Understanding given us to collect our obligations to Him and to Society. But this is not all. We have within ourselves a power of choosing to perform certain actions, and to refrain from others:—and it is remarkable that the knowledge of all the parts of this threefold composition of man equally

exceeds the limits of our slender capacities. In many cases we *understand* our duty, and are conscious that we ought to act in some particular way; but in what manner the reasons, which we have for thinking so, are efficacious in producing such a sentiment or conclusion, we are totally ignorant. The same may be said of the human *Will*. We are sure that we are perpetually choosing and resolving every moment of our lives; and if we nicely attend to the operations of our minds, we can always give some reason or other for the choice and resolution: but in what manner the internal structure of this faculty is affected by a reason or a motive, must be hidden from us until we are able to penetrate farther into the essences of Spirits. At present we

find ourselves never able to go beyond the simple matter of fact and experience. Even the various motions of our corporeal faculties, which are the constant objects of our senses, are utterly unaccountable. We choose to move, and our bodies change their place; we choose to read a particular author, and the next moment the book is in our hands:—this is a familiar but an amazing process. But though we cannot, in any one instance, explain the remote causes of our own operations, yet we may safely infer, from the operations themselves, that a being who is formed with such faculties can be possessed of no Liberty but what consists in an opportunity of acting according to his own Inclination. Even superior Beings, who may be conceived



to have more penetrating understandings, and in general to possess faculties of a higher order, are incapable of any other kind of Liberty. In the nature of things we cannot possibly conceive a more perfect constitution of the freedom of a dependent Being than that he should have Understanding to know, a Will to choose, and powers to execute, his Duty. Any action which is the combined effect of these three energies we reasonably denominate moral; and, in fact, we always determine the quality of the action, without inquiring into the cause of the volition which produced it. A true philosopher is particularly cautious not to ascribe any qualities to an object, which he cannot fairly deduce from experiment

and observation. The Arminian is not content with transgressing this safe and excellent rule; he goes farther; he not only ascribes *imaginary* properties to the actions of men, but properties which are supposed to result from indifference, and are therefore incapable of real existence according to the established constitution of things and the analogy of nature. This reasoning is entirely decisive; for though we are always unable by the utmost stretch of thinking to reach the distant cause of an event, yet we never deny the existence of such a cause; nor is there any peculiar reason to be given why the voluntary actions of men should be conceived to possess the singular privilege of originating from themselves. The ordinary acts of our understandings and the

motions of our limbs are no better understood than the determinations of the will; and you are not to suppose that, in one case, you see clearer reasons for the event than you do in the other, because such an opinion may seem to lay the foundation of that obscure and unintelligible article of Arminianism, the self-determining power of the will. It is needless to insist farther on the extreme importance of attending closely to this part of human ignorance :—and the fact itself is indisputable, though the observation of it may escape by far the greater part of mankind, who are generally disposed to believe themselves sufficiently acquainted with the internal structure of things. It will by no means follow, from this description of human freedom, that there is really no differ-

ence of character among men ; or that the morality of their actions depends upon the necessary influence of external motives. All the effects which are ever known to take place among men are attended with several circumstances which must always be duly weighed in judging of the nature of their efficient causes. Fire does not always produce the agreeable sensation of warmth ; it sometimes gives pain ; wine does not always exhilarate the spirits, it sometimes increases a fever ; the sun does not always cause vegetation, it sometimes dries up and scorches the soil :— and, in every instance which you can possibly bring, some allowance must be made for the peculiar circumstances of the active principle. It seems then a great oversight, or partiality, to neglect

this usual precaution, when you inquire into the proximate cause of human volition. You reason as if we believed the external motive to carry along with it an absolute influence upon the mind ; when, in reality, we only affirm that persuasion or commands, the hopes of future rewards or the dread of future punishment, are effectual in producing different events, according to the different circumstances in which these powers are supposed to exert their energies ; and that it is absolutely necessary here, as in other cases, to attend very exactly to these circumstances, in order to judge of the effects which they will have upon the human mind. These circumstances we usually denominate by one word, the *disposition* of the moral agent ; and we have no other method of

ascertaining the nature of this disposition than, as in other cases, by repeated observations. In fact, by the term disposition, we can only mean *something* in the composition of man, the nature of which we are utterly unacquainted with; but which is materially concerned in the production of volitions. We are sure that that this unintelligible *something* really exists, because the same external incitements to virtue and vice have very different effects upon different persons: and to what can we so reasonably ascribe a difference of operation in the same motives, as to some essential difference in the structure of the choosing principle? You may as well deny the existence of that power by which bodies tend to the centre of the earth, because you see no reason for such a particular

determination of the motion, as affirm that all minds are constituted precisely alike, when the same exhortations and threatenings evidently produce distinct thoughts and resolutions, with an endless variety. You believe that the will is indifferent, determines itself, and according to the nature of the determination the man becomes virtuous or vicious; whereas the Calvinist supposes the agent to be virtuous or vicious before any choice is made, according as his will is disposed to be affected by motives of a particular class: and though we have no way of collecting the disposition of any one but from the choice which he makes, yet we always suppose his CHARACTER to be beforehand determined in the judgment of that being who has capacity suffi-

cient to understand the tendency of dormant principles. A man of a truly benevolent temper is not a whit the less so because he is unfortunately cast upon a desert island, and has no opportunity of increasing the happiness or lessening the miseries of his fellow creatures; and you may understand, from this representation of the nature of virtue and vice, how far we are justified in making an allowance for the peculiar situations of men, and the strength of temptation. Some allowance in this respect must be made, or our judgments of characters will be extremely inadequate.

14. Two persons of exactly the same disposition, or, which is the same thing, two persons who would choose to act



exactly alike in the same external circumstances, may in opposite circumstances appear extremely different to an incautious observer, who considers not that a decent and regular conduct may be the effect of self-interest and outward restraint ; and that a profane and immoral turn of thinking will always give rise to the most atrocious actions, when surrounded by those circumstances which are usually observed to call forth the vicious and depraved parts of the characters of men. However, the essence of virtue and vice, whether we mistake in our opinions or not, never depends on the external motives, but always on the internal disposition of the agent: and no general rule can be given for directing our judgments, except that we

should carefully attend to the whole conduct of men, and endeavour to collect the principles by which they are actuated, from their behaviour in their respective situations.—You must be sensible that there is no part of this reasoning but what is founded on the common and established principles of Experimental Philosophy. We have made no suppositions and drawn no conclusions, but what are the direct consequence of the constitution of human nature. The Arminian attempts to go farther ; and in the attempt plunges into an ocean of obscurity. We differ not from you so much because your principles are false, as because they have no consistent meaning. You deride the Calvinist for using suitable means in order to obtain certain ends ;

and you see not that, in this respect, a doctrine which maintains a principle of indifference, of contingency, of chance, most eminently deserves our ridicule. If different events have no connexion in nature, if a particular motive, operating on the human will particularly disposed, does not necessarily produce a particular effect, it is indeed in vain to use means, to exhort, to persuade. But the perfect propriety of using means upon all occasions appears from this single reflection, that they are absolutely *necessary* for procuring the ends ;—the most cogent argument that can be conceived ! but which is weakened, if not entirely destroyed, by admitting an imaginary power of self-determination. These are without disguise the principles which we main-

tain ; and which the reproachful name of Fatalist will hardly induce us to abandon, until we really find that there is in nature no connexion between the means and the ends. We will cease to sow our fields with corn when the harvest does *not* follow : we will cease to persuade and to threaten when it shall appear from experience that persuasion and threatening do no good ; at present they are often observed to rouse the dormant principles of our dispositions, and to produce the most important consequences. We may justly affirm that the constant use of proper means not only tends to prevent a destructive inactivity of temper ; but also, by a particular constitution of nature, to strengthen the disposition itself. As the limbs of the industrious peasant

by continued labour grow more robust and muscular, so the incomprehensible texture of the human mind seems to acquire a firmer consistence, and a greater degree of cohesion, by a repetition of virtuous exertions.

15. Your objections to the doctrine of necessity, which are drawn from the consideration of the moral character of the Supreme Being, are briefly answered in a similar way. It is admitted that we know the nature of God no farther than he has been pleased to reveal himself in the works which are the objects of our contemplation. Besides a wonderful and endless variety of curious machinery in the material world, we observe a minute and almost imperceptible gradation of intellectual

faculties in the intelligent part of the creation. We have no instance of a Being that is possessed of greater capacity and understanding than man ; but we are helped, in our conceptions of such a Being, by observing this gradation of intelligence : and we are sure that such a Being really exists, because he has planned and produced an immense system of things, infinitely superior to any production of human wisdom or human contrivance. Thus we may transfer the same faculties of understanding and of choosing, which we experience in ourselves, to an unknown Being ; and suppose them to exist in the Divine Essence in a much greater degree of perfection than they do in us : but we can go no farther. The most pious and well-disposed mind can

have no idea of any powers or energies which discover not themselves by their effects to the understanding or senses ; and we ought never, under the pretence of reverence for the adorable nature of the Supreme Being, to ascribe such attributes and perfections to Him as will be found, on examination, to be sounds without meaning. Hence, by the freedom and independence of the Deity we can only mean that He is The Wise Disposer of all things ; and that He is in no instance prevented from acting as he pleases, by any impediment or obstacle without himself. His unerring Wisdom secures him from mistake, and his infinite Power enables him to perform whatever, in the depths of his counsels, he thinks proper to be done. The freedom of man we have found

to be proportional to the opportunity which he has of acting according to his own inclinations ; and in what else can we conceive the freedom of God to consist ? We are weak, short-sighted and dependent creatures ; and what can we do more than imagine all imperfection to be removed ; and suppose the portions of intelligence and power which we possess to be increased and extended, in the character of the Supreme Being, beyond all limits and conception. This reasoning will hardly be mistaken. We pretend not to say that the incomprehensible Essence of the Deity may not possibly admit of some principles very different in their *nature*, from any thing which composes the Intelligent Part of man ; but only remind you that, if it does admit



of any such myterious energies, we can have no idea of them, must never reason from them ; and that, although we indulge the utmost licence of imagination, we shall always be unable to conceive any other Liberty, in the Divine Being, than simply a removal of every restraint and impediment to the performance of his Almighty Will. The practical consequence of this doctrine is obvious : The nature of true virtue and holiness depends not upon the Will of God, but upon the unalterable fitness of things. His choice does not constitute the Essence of Goodness, but he chooses what is good, because he knows in what its essence consists. There are but two ways of conceiving this matter : Either there is in the nature of things an Essential

difference between virtue and vice, or the Supreme Being *constitutes* a difference, by choosing to act in a particular way, without any reason. We embrace the former supposition. The latter is founded on the most unintelligible mysticism, and if pushed into all its consequences will hardly fall short of Atheism itself. It is true that the blindness and ignorance of man prevent him from seeing the ultimate reasons of things ; and therefore it is always his greatest wisdom to place an implicit confidence in the Revealed Will of that Being upon whom he depends for all things ; but this needs not to alter the nature of his belief. There is surely no inconsistency in believing that whatever God chooses is right, and that He has always some reason for his

choice. Our regard and veneration for the character of the Supreme Being arises from this particular circumstance—that we always conceive Him to act from the *best* of motives ; and our sense of obligation to Him is heightened by the same reflection. It is remarkable that the very necessity which appears to you to dissolve all sense of love and gratitude in a dependent creature, is according to our views of things, the striking feature in the object of those religious affections. We can admire the prodigious extent of those immeasurable powers which produced the grandeur of the creation ; but we profess not to love and praise with sincerity a Being who chooses without motives, and consequently acts at random in a

state of complete indifference. You are alarmed where there is really no danger. You imagine that the necessity which we maintain is, some way or other, a degradation of the character of God ; whereas, on the contrary, it is inseparably connected with his moral excellence. When we say that the Divine Will is necessarily determined to choose what is best, what do we say more than that the Deity is directed by the most consummate wisdom ? Mistake not our meaning in the haste of controversy, nor rashly conclude that we surround the first Cause of all things with the necessary influence of external motives. We neither affirm that the volitions of the Almighty are produced by the external operation of material or intelligent agents,

nor that they are preceded in order of time by internal reasons and inducements. No: His volitions have neither beginning nor succession; but are eternal, and co-existent with the fitness of things upon which they depend; and it is only in the order of our narrow perceptions that we must conceive an eternal and universal view of the necessary relations and dependencies of objects, to precede the righteous Will of our Creator and Governor. There can be no doubt that ideas as well as words are wanting to us on this most sublime subject; yet it does not appear that the representation we have given is liable to any just exception. The utmost we can do in this case is, to combine together such ideas as we have ourselves ac-

quired from experience; and we shall be convinced, after the maturest reflection, that the complex idea of an Omnipotent Agent choosing in all cases with perfect wisdom is the most magnificent conception we can form of the Deity.

16. The Scripture doctrines of Original Sin, of Salvation by Christ, and of Predestination to Eternal Life, are explained by the Calvinist and the Arminian in very different ways; but yet the difference is such as might naturally be expected from the principles which they respectively maintain. In the Calvinist we may observe the same pretensions to accurate reasoning, the same close adherence to experiment, and the same firm determination to

exclude all imaginary powers and faculties of the human soul ; whilst the Arminian discovers the same discontent and uneasiness concerning the nature of Virtue and Vice, insists that the distinction which is observed to subsist among men in this respect depends in some way or other upon themselves, and admits not of that close connexion between the cause and the effect in spiritual things, which may safely be allowed to take place in other matters that are more the objects of our understanding and comprehension.

17. The doctrine of Original Sin, says the Calvinist, is an awful truth ; you may find it described in almost every page of Scripture, and may discern

its effects in almost every transaction of life. Man is entirely fallen from God ; his disposition is depraved and corrupted, and in his natural state he is incapable of thinking a good thought or of performing a good action. In these deplorable circumstances, the kindness and love of God .our Saviour towards man appeared, in accepting the atonement of His own Son, made upon the cross, and in deigning to renew man's fallen nature by the operation of his Holy Spirit. This operation is effectual in enlightening his moral perceptions and directing his Will. He who before had no taste for true religion and virtue, now sees the spiritual beauty of holiness, and discovers the divine nature of those new principles by which he is actuated in his life and conversation.



All this is perfectly intelligible, and consistent with the most accurate notions which we are able to form from experience of the nature of the human disposition. Whether it be true or not is entirely another question ; a question which can only be resolved after a diligent examination of the Scriptures themselves. The thing here particularly insisted on is, that no argument can be drawn from reason or experience against the representation which we have given of the characters of the natural man and of the believing Christian. There can be no doubt that mankind are plunged in vice and misery, and therefore whatever notions we choose to form to ourselves concerning the nature of Original Sin, there is no reasoning against plain matter of fact. A cor-

rupted practice amongst men evidently demonstrates a corrupted principle ; and it is vain to urge the moral attributes of our Creator, with a view of establishing the purity of the creature, when these attributes themselves must be collected and proved from the general appearances of things. Perhaps we may be allowed to hesitate in pronouncing the depravity of man to be so great as to deserve an eternal curse and separation from God, because unassisted reason is entirely unfit to handle these sublime mysteries ; but still, it will always be true that there is no apparent absurdity in such an opinion, and it is therefore always presumptuous in us to reject so important a doctrine, if clearly revealed in the Scriptures. Nor does the manner of the Christian's conver-

sion contain any thing contradictory to the justest conclusions of reason and philosophy ; and it would well become those who reject the peculiar doctrines of Revelation on this account, to consider seriously the force of these arguments. We have seen that, in the term *disposition*, there is implied no more than that unknown and incomprehensible structure of the will, by which it yields to the influence of particular motives ; and that the virtue of the agent depends not upon the manner in which that effect is produced, but upon the nature of the disposition itself. Strange therefore to object that our actions are less virtuous, because our tempers are made better by the irresistible efficacy of God's Holy Spirit. If our dispositions be changed,

there must be some reason for the change. The idea of a self-determining power has been abundantly refuted. We have no experience of the nature of that process by which the mental faculties can be affected ; yet all the objections of Arminians and Free-thinkers on this head are grounded on the *imaginary* supposition that the necessary agency of the Divine Being in rectifying our dispositions is inconsistent with the true nature of morality.

18. If you inquire into the cause of that distinguishing grace by which God chooses to separate a part of his creatures from the whole, and think that we contradict ourselves in supposing God to prefer some men to others, when in reality, according to our own account,

all men are equally in a state of condemnation,—we answer, that it will not follow that God chooses without motives or reasons, merely because in this instance it does not appear to us that a reason for preference exists. If all men are precisely in the same circumstances of irretrievable guilt and misery, then God cannot in strict propriety of speech be said to prefer some men to others ; because such a preference implies a difference in the state of their affections and tempers. He may, however, for wise and good reasons, choose to save *some*, rather than permit *all* to perish and feel the inevitable consequences of sin and transgression ; and that such reasons do not really exist in the omniscient mind of God, you will hardly venture to affirm. Thus it ap-

pears that the doctrine of Predestination to eternal life is evidently implied in the nature of the Christian dispensation ; and is not so much an article of belief on its own account, as a plain and direct consequence of the doctrine of Regeneration. For if all men are naturally in a state of condemnation, and must for ever remain so until God, by the special influence of His Spirit, works a mighty change on the heart and affections, then, because all things are ever present in the mind of God, he must have decreed before the foundations of the world, to save those who were predestinated in the fulness of time to receive the Holy Ghost. It will be needless here to repeat all the reasons for the propriety of using means, in order to obtain the desired

ends. It is sufficient that we are exhorted in Scripture to use constant prayer and diligence; and that the effects of the operation of the Holy Spirit, which are all that we know concerning it, are usually observed to take place after a steady perseverance in the performance of religious duties.

19. It is not uncommon for an Arminian to be orthodox in his belief in the doctrines of Christianity. He may admit the universal depravity of human nature, the atonement by the death of Christ, and the necessity of the influences of the Holy Spirit; but he is an Arminian still, and you may easily trace, in his explanations of these important points, his distinguishing principles. Man is a fallen creature, and will

never rise again to virtue and true holiness, unless the mercy of God be extended to him through the person of Christ Jesus. But, happily for fallen man, the Son of God came into the world not to save a remnant, but all mankind ; and although we are of ourselves unable to do *any thing*, yet by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, directing our judgments and invigorating our feeble resolutions, we may bring forth works meet for repentance. A portion of this Spirit we conceive to be given to every man ; and it is the use which is made of this *free gift*, which constitutes the final difference of characters. We may either oppose, or we may co-operate with, the motions of the Divine Principle : God does not compel but invite men to be saved : His Spirit does



not take away the use of our natural faculties, but removes the impediments which sin and guilt had thrown in our way. Its influence then is not irresistible, as experience too often shews. The human heart may be so hardened as effectually to withstand the power of divine Grace, and God will not always strive with man. This is what we must never give up ; because if we once allow that the operation of a superior and external principle is the *sole* and proper cause of true repentance, there is an end of all human endeavours, and a total subversion of the nature of virtue. We admit that the Supreme Being foreknows all events and contingencies, all the thoughts and resolutions of the human mind ; but this concession will not prove that He

has *absolutely decreed* to deliver only a part of mankind from sin and its consequences, and to abandon all the rest to a hopeless state of misery ; or, what is worse, to insult them with such a measure of divine irradiation as he knows will be ineffectual to their conversion, and only serve to increase their condemnation. There is a distinction to be observed between foreknowledge and predestination. The former only implies that God foresees the use which men will make of the opportunities which He shall afford them ; whereas the latter inevitably fixes their condition, and reduces all human activity to a continued succession of necessary events. And is there really no difference between the two cases ? Are you sure that foreknow-

ledge in God is a full proof of the certainty, and inconsistent with the contingency, of any event? Can we reasonably transfer our ideas of knowledge in man, to the case of foreknowledge in God; a thing totally different in its kind, and concerning which we have neither experience nor analogy to direct our judgments? And lastly, is it impossible that the Supreme Being, before whom all things are present, should foreknow the future actions of men in a manner which is incomprehensible to us, because it has no relation to any human process of thinking? This supposition is at least sufficient to *save* the conclusion which you would draw from the prescience of God, concerning the absolute necessity of every event; and if it were not so, if the

prescience of God and the liberty of man were inconsistent with each other, we should not hesitate to affirm that the evidence which we feel within ourselves, of an entire freedom from all necessity and restraint, is superior to any evidence which we can possibly have of the prescience of God; and to conclude that the Supreme Intelligence is really possessed of no attribute so incompatible with our consciousness, and so destructive of Religion.—But suppose, continues the Arminian, we allow the principles which you, Calvinists, maintain to be more philosophical in their nature and more analogous to the established rules of experimental reasoning on material objects—there is another topic of very serious moment, which we may always insist

on with the greatest advantage, and which is intimately blended with the present controversy.—The origin of Evil, or the first entrance of Sin into the world, has always been considered as the most perplexing question in Metaphysics, itself the most contentious science. The antient philosophers were so struck with the difficulty of accounting for the existence of vice, upon the supposition of infinite power and perfect benevolence in the Supreme Cause of all things, that they framed to themselves a variety of incoherent hypotheses, to reconcile the theory of natural Religion with experience and observation; and in modern times you will hardly find a pious and learned name which has not been marked by an industrious zeal for explaining the same

phenomena, and “justifying the ways of God to man.” But it has been found, after the most accurate scrutiny, that the Arminian hypothesis of the freedom of man is the only theory which is capable of preserving entire the moral character of God, and, at the same time, of furnishing us with a consistent account of the Origin of Evil. Impossibilities and contradictions are not the objects of power; and therefore the Deity could not indulge a dependent creature with the extraordinary endowment of liberty, and also secure him in his conduct from the abuse of so eminent a privilege. If the powers of man in choosing are necessarily determined by his Maker in one particular direction, we may well be astonished while we contemplate the

dismal scenes of human life ; and the Calvinist may vainly attempt to infer the existence of a just and benevolent Being, amidst the violence of contending passions and the universal scramble for riches and honours.—But if, on the contrary, we suppose that a self-determining principle enters the composition of our thinking faculties ; and that all the vice and irreligion in the world arise from the folly of man and the abuse of his noblest endowment, how natural a solution is this of all the difficulties which present themselves on this occasion to the anxious mind !—‘ Though man’s a fool, yet God is wise.’—One would think that a doctrine which can alone boast the singular excellence of vindicating the ways of God would meet with a cordial reception

from a sincere lover of religion, notwithstanding some difficulty or obscurity in the conception of a contingent event ; and that you would finally be induced to reject an opinion, however specious or intelligible, which manifestly leads to profaneness and impiety, by involving our Creator in the turpitude of human vices.

20. Evil then, replies the Calvinist, has its origin in the abuse of man's self-determining powers ; and on farther inquiry we find the determinations of the Will to take place without any reasons or motives. This is not to explain how Evil comes into the world, but to ascribe its beginning to no cause whatever. We reject not this boasted theory on account of any trifling difficulties in



some parts of it, but because it subverts the foundation of all reasoning from effects to causes, and tends to impose on our judgments by holding forth a dark and imaginary solution of a very interesting question. We may farther add that, if you admit the prescience of the Supreme Being in its full extent, you fall into the flattest contradiction in supposing the possibility of a contingency of human actions; for the question is not whether an Omniscient Being may know the future actions of a free agent in a manner which we can have no idea of, but whether He knows them at all. We readily allow that the manner may far exceed the comprehension of man, but deny that a future and contingent event is any object of knowledge, ac-

cording to our clearest perceptions and apprehensions of things. There is, in truth, but one way of satisfying the restless curiosity, or at least of silencing the secret murmurs of the human heart, on this perplexed subject. We must plainly confess that the Author of Nature, in his general constitution of things, designed to *permit* the existence of moral evil. It is in vain to deny what experience demonstrates to be true; and it is absurd to suppose the moral Governor of the universe to be either impotent or ignorant. He was undoubtedly able, if he had pleased, to prevent the existence of any of His creatures; and the Arminian will allow that He clearly foresaw the future dispositions of those who would abuse their liberty by corrupt and vicious in-

clinations. The obvious consequence is, that, with respect to the existence of a just and benevolent Author of Nature, there is no difficulty here but what is common to the Arminian scheme; and that, on the whole, He must have judged it better that moral evil should exist, than that there should be no such thing. We must not pretend to judge of the ends and purposes of so wonderful a dispensation; but we have the best reasons to believe them wise and holy; and we may in some measure understand how it was possible that Evil should enter the world, without supposing any injustice or malevolence in the Supreme Agent. Conceive Adam in his original innocence to have been possessed of all the various springs and principles which now

actuate the disordered frame of man ; there is no inconsistency in this. The milder affections of love, friendship, and benevolence, are easily admitted as parts of a virtuous constitution ; while the more turbulent passions of ambition, resentment and malice, are known to receive their names from the irregular and excessive action of certain useful and even generous movements of the human mind. There is not a vice which disgraces the fallen nature of man, that does not arise from the abuse of some mental or corporeal endowment ; and that may not be resolved into an unreasonable and ill-directed attention to particular objects. Our passions and appetites are in themselves not vicious or blamable ; but only stand in need of some

superior principles to govern and direct their motions. These superior principles are a high veneration for the character of God, and a strong sense of our dependent condition : and as long as these were superadded to the complex nature of Adam, the whole man was one consistent and harmonious being, and all his thoughts and actions were regulated with the greatest exactness. No excess, no defect ; the divine affections of love and gratitude maintained an entire superiority in his heart ; while the subordinate feelings of self-love and sensual gratification uniformly produced their temperate effects in the accurate and well-adjusted system. But things did not long continue in this fair and happy state. The health and vigour of those divine and ruling

principles in the creature depended upon an intimate and incomprehensible communication with the Creator ; and God determined, for unknown but good reasons, to suspend that close connexion between Himself and man, and to withdraw the special influences of His Almighty presence. Now mark the consequences ; Man has lost the supreme regard and veneration for his Maker, which, while they remained in full force, restrained and checked the efforts of appetite, and converted every affection and inclination into some useful instrument of private or of social advantage. The same desires and affections, which before were subordinate to better principles, have now gained the ascendancy in the human heart ; and, instead of preserving their

just proportion of active influence in the compound machine, aspire to the supreme direction of almost every movement, and shake the fabric of our nature with perpetual convulsions. Here then is the origin of Vice and Immorality. The component parts of our constitution are good, but there is something farther wanting; there is no positive infusion of evil into our dispositions (as some ignorantly suppose) but we are left to ourselves. Through the cloud of our evil propensities and prejudices we can dimly discern the limits of indulgence which we ought never to exceed; but we infallibly do exceed them, and mere human nature is insufficient for the regulation of those appetites and passions which are plainly innocent in themselves, and had a

beneficial effect in the original formation of man.

This brief account of the first entrance of sin into the world presumes not to explain the reasons of God's dealings with men. It is sufficient if we can clearly perceive that there is nothing blameable or unjust in that agency which deprives a dependent creature of a partial emanation of the Divine nature. Self-love is evidently a useful ingredient in the human composition, and even essential to our preservation ; and it does not appear that the Supreme Being is under any obligation to restrain its excesses.

20. There seems to be a foundation laid in the constitution of our nature



for the opposite sentiments of the Calvinist and the Arminian. Whoever has frequently reflected without prejudice on the evidences of a free agency and a moral sense, must have observed his ideas at different times to flow in different channels. When we consider man as an accountable being, we are naturally inclined to view ourselves as the primary cause of all our volitions and actions; we are unwilling to admit the necessary influence of external motives; and we are even anxious to shew that our internal dispositions are of our own making, and, in all their changes and modifications, depend upon some hidden operations which the mind directs. Hence the origin of those sentiments which we have attributed to the Arminian; hence

the obscurity of his reasonings and the clearness of his intentions. He speaks from his feelings. On the other hand, when we cease to attend to the *morality* of human volitions, and consider them as so many *events* which happen to fall under our observation, we reason about them as we would do about any other events, and find no *peculiar* difficulty in assigning their causes. We are evidently not ignorant of some of the circumstances which attend the production of these effects; and no instance of causation can be given where we know them all. Every object in nature abounds with inexplicable properties; and therefore, as philosophers, we are contented with a careful experimental inquiry. This inquiry terminates, as in other cases, in a full conviction of

some necessary connexion between the preceding motives and the consequent volitions of our minds ; and hence the doctrine of necessity and the whole train of Calvinistical argument ;—hence those confident appeals to experience and that contempt of hypothesis and mystery. In treating this subject I was willing to take advantage of this natural division of our thoughts ; and, instead of undertaking to defend either side of the question, to give full scope to both sides. It seldom happens, indeed, that an opponent gives a fair and candid account of the sentiments of his adversary. I am, however, not conscious that I have designedly either omitted or disguised any material argument which has occurred in the course of this laborious investigation. I do not

know that an Arminian can say stronger things against the opinion of universal necessity, or bring better reasons in favour of a self-determining power of the will ; nor am I aware that a more accurate and philosophical defence of his system can be adduced by the Calvinist, in a different mode or upon different principles. If the latter, in many parts, seems to get the victory, it is, I think, because the Arminian attempts too much. He attempts to reconcile a contingency of human volitions with the existence of a first cause, and the constitution of the world ; whereas the Calvinist takes man as he finds him ; examines experimentally into the nature of our composition ; and rejects every scheme of liberty which he cannot understand, and which is inconsistent with what he actually

observes. As long as he strictly adheres to these safer principles of philosophy, he will always have the advantage; but the moment he quits them, and indulges a vain curiosity in explaining the first entrance of sin into the world, he has left his strong hold; he has forgotten the blindness and ignorance of man; he is upon the same ground with the Arminian; and, like him exposed to the dangerous direction of fancy and imagination. The origin of evil is, no doubt, the great difficulty in religion and morality; and the solution of it is plainly above our faculties. Frame to yourself a system of freedom which shall seem to account for the beginnings of vice, and you will soon grow unintelligible in expression, and will reason against experience; in short,

you will become an Arminian:—concern not yourself with such abstruse and metaphysical subtilties, and all will be plain and easy ; your notions of virtue and vice will be just, as far as they go ; you will be secured from error ; you will naturally fall into Calvinism. This, I think, is a true history of the rise and progress of these different sentiments in the human heart ; and it now only remains that we should explain ourselves more fully concerning the Calvinistical account of the fall of Adam, and concerning the foundation of morality.

21. We have already remarked that the Calvinist, in attempting to explain the first entrance of sin into the world, had quitted his strong hold, and was upon the same ground with the Ar-

minian ; and this will be found, on the nicest examination, to be so far true, that this *great difficulty*, which is ever present to the mind of a thoughtful Arminian, is not in the least removed by the plausible theory of his opponent. God is good and powerful, and he is, in the strictest sense, the Author of all things. But whence the necessity of Vice and Immorality ? This is the simple state of the question ; and it is no relief of our anxiety in this instance to be told that man, in his original condition, was composed of a variety of harmonious principles, but that he has now lost the directing spring of all his movements and operations. It may have a specious appearance to say that there is no positive infusion of evil into our nature, and that God only

withdrew the special influences of his presence ; but there is really more sound than sense in such an explanation. For what can be meant by a positive infusion of evil, but an actual constitution of inordinate affections ; and what difference is there between God's creating a wicked being, and depriving a good one of that particular circumstance upon which his goodness depends ? Shall we say that the Supreme Being did not determine to suspend all communion between Himself and the creature, till after that Adam had first transgressed, and sin had already entered the world ? Some Calvinists seem to think so ; \* but they forget that a change of disposition requires the energy of some sufficient

\* Edwards on Original Sin.



cause ; and we have chosen to avoid so palpable an inconsistency :—there cannot be a greater delusion ; it is the essence of Arminianism. Shall we say that God is not the *Author* of sin, but only that He so disposes events as to *permit* its existence ? Such expressions savour more of evasion and artifice, than of sound philosophy and open conviction. A superintendent of the works of another being may permit, or not hinder, the consequences of which he is not the author ; but He who made and governs all things cannot, I think, be said to permit what he did not cause. The conclusions are,—the Calvinist has described very accurately in what sin consists ; but he has not discovered its origin ; we are *sure* that God is not accountable for any thing he does,

because he is perfectly independent; we *believe* that He is not blameable in any thing he does, because in the works of the creation we can evidently trace the vestiges of a righteous Governor; but in what manner, or for what reasons, he is the good and benevolent cause of evil, we must not pretend to have the most distant conception.

22. The Arminian has sufficiently proved that there is a strong tendency in human nature to throw the whole blame of vice upon man, and to consider *him* as the ultimate cause of his own volitions; but the Calvinist has taught us to separate these two propositions from each other, and always to judge of the disposition of an agent from the choices which he makes, with-

out ever inquiring into their cause; and if any thing can be added to what he has so well urged on this head, it may be, that in the very same sense in which God is the Author of all things, it is impossible that man should be the author of any thing. For suppose a created being in the first moment of his existence to be placed upon this globe which we inhabit, with all his faculties entire, and to make a particular choice;—it is evident that there is a sense in which this first choice cannot be said to be his own, or to be produced by himself; it is the effect of external motives, of an internal principle, or of the combined operation of both: but this Being, by the supposition, neither created his own disposition nor the objects with which he is sur-

rounded :—the inference is obvious.—  
 We may farther add, that as far as this single volition may be supposed to constitute the beginning of a habit, and to have affected the original temper, so far this Being cannot properly be called the efficient cause of the alteration of his disposition. Then, the next volition which he makes will be no more his own than the first; and by proceeding in this manner, it will plainly appear that every succeeding volition is the necessary result of motives and causes which were constituted and arranged by some superior power, and by their continued operation produce a most wonderful variety of thoughts and resolutions.

23. This argument, which, I think, cannot reasonably be suspected of to:

phism, is the natural growth of a deep inquiry into the origin of evil; and gives rise to a sceptical consideration of the last importance. Is there any such thing as Virtue or Vice in the world?—Both the Calvinist and the Arminian seem all along to have taken this for granted. The Calvinist has observed that we cannot possibly conceive any other kind of freedom, in a dependent creature, than that of which we actually find ourselves to be possessed. This is undoubtedly true; but perhaps it is equally so, that a dependent creature is incapable of merit or blame;—perhaps it implies a contradiction in the nature of things to suppose that the Supreme Being, who is himself the fountain of existence, should create a virtuous or a vicious being.

24. Not to dissemble in a matter of such vast moment—I do not know how such a conclusion could be avoided, if God had not deeply implanted in our nature a strong sense of right and wrong—if conscience did not incessantly accuse or approve our proceedings, with a silent but powerful eloquence. In common life we meet with few practical difficulties on this head. It is when we retire into our closets, and turn speculative philosophers, that we doubt of every thing. We consider our actions as so many effects; we connect them with the preceding causes; and, mounting up step by step to the Supreme Author of all things, we feel ourselves inclined to ascribe all praise or blame to him. But we are unable to maintain this dan-

gerous sentiment for a moment. What, no duties! no guilt!—The internal monitor steps in at the crisis; commands our whole attention; forbids the hasty inference; and marks the great outlines of obligation with a convincing precision.

25. This reasoning will not appear more extraordinary to the reader, than it did to the writer, of this Essay, when it first occurred to him. On a careful review of the whole, he cannot but think that Conscience, as distinguished from the Understanding, is the natural guardian of virtue.—Mere human reasoning seems insufficient to discover the true essence of Morality, or to establish its foundations; and the Omniscient Creator has

wisely secured us from the precarious determinations of so imperfect a faculty.

We abuse our noblest endowments, when we profanely reject the dictates of conscience, and suppose them to be delusive admonitions, because we cannot clearly perceive the necessity of moral relations ;—we use them as we ought, when we are disposed to receive implicitly the intimations which they afford us of the Divine Will.—No propositions seem to be better founded than these—That our characters are to be estimated simply by the nature of our dispositions, and That we are constituted moral agents by a moral sense of Virtue and Vice. It is therefore highly absurd to object irrationally to



the Doctrines of Original Sin, of Free Grace, of the Influence of the Holy Spirit. Whether those Articles of the Christian faith, as explained by the Calvinist, are to be found in Scripture, I pretend not to determine; I only remark that they are not irrational.—The Socinian should change his ground, and shew his good sense in rejecting those doctrines because they are not revealed, and not because they are repugnant to reason.

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